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**THE BALKAN CRISIS 1912 - 1913  
THE BALKAN LEAGUE ALLIANCE**

**BY**

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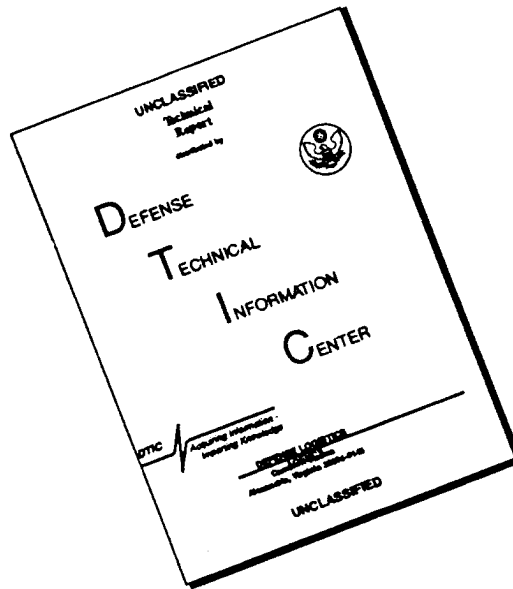
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## ABSTRACT

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The Balkan wars (1912-1913) were two short wars which prepared the way for World War I. The First Balkan War was fought by four Balkan states against Turkey for the redistribution of the European territories of the Ottoman Empire. Serbia and Bulgaria accordingly concluded a treaty of alliance, to be joined later on by Greece and Montenegro. The alliance became known as the Balkan League. After the conclusion of the hostilities of the first war, the Conferences of the Ambassadors of the Great Powers followed, in order to settle the newly created *status quo*. Dissatisfied with the resulting agreements, Serbia allied with Greece and demanded a greater share of Macedonia from Bulgaria. Infuriated Bulgaria attacked Serbia. Consequently Greece, Romania and Turkey joined in on Serbia's side. In this Second Balkan War Bulgaria was defeated and lost territory to all her enemies.

This paper focuses on the circumstances in which the Balkan League was created and the events that led to its destruction.

# THE BALKAN CRISIS 1912 - 1913

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Bayonet Charge

*Yaroslav Veshin. Oil on canvas*

Dedicated to the storming of Fortified Adrianople

## **THE BALKAN CRISIS 1912 - 1913**

### **THE BALKAN LEAGUE ALLIANCE**

#### **Introduction**

At the beginning of last century the entire Balkan Peninsula, from the Aegean Sea and the Turkish straits to the borders of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires, had been, with minor exceptions, embraced by the Turkish empire. Over the next 100 years the Turks were been compelled to withdraw southward and eastward, until all that remained of their European dominions were the southernmost parts of the peninsula, primarily Thrace and Macedonia.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, a number of new states - notably Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro and Romania - had emerged, liberated from Turkish control (see appendix). These states were, without exception, governed by monarchs who were, as a rule, somewhat more moderate and thoughtful than their subjects. However their dynasties were not established and their powers were usually disputed by inexperienced and unruly parliamentary bodies. Borders were in the main vaguely drawn and in dispute. The entire peninsula was, in short, deficient of international stability.

This was a time in history when the powerful forces of modern nationalism were prevailing worldwide. This experience was

most intense in nations new to the experience of political independence. However, nowhere did this experience have a more violent and intoxicating effect than on the political and military leaders of the newly founded Balkan countries. If, initially, the leading impulses for the expulsion of the Turks from Europe had come from the neighboring great powers, Russia and Austria-Hungary, the political leaders of the newly established Balkan states were now beginning to take matters into their own hands. It was hard for people who had recently achieved so much so suddenly, to know where to stop. Dreams of new glories to flow from new territorial expansion bedeviled many minds. Visions of a greater this or that: a "Greater Serbia," a "Greater Bulgaria," and so on clouded the air. The remaining areas of Turkish control in the southern Balkans, Thrace and Macedonia, were by no means the only objectives of their aspirations, they were the principal ones. Turkey was regarded, to use the common phrase of the time, as "the sick man of Europe." If this "sick man" had now been expelled from most of the peninsula, was there any reason why he could not be expelled from the remainder as well? That, however, required alliance and common action. "Let us unite to complete the expulsion of the Turks," was the general feeling. "And then, when we are free," as one Bulgarian revolutionary put it, "each shall have what belongs to him."

### **The Creation of the Balkan League**

The Balkan League did not come out of the blue. It was born

out of the Balkan states' shared interests to settle the Balkan Question (a major part of the Eastern Question) by their own resources. Russian diplomacy acted as a "midwife".

The modern history of the alliance essentially began in 1891 when the Greek Minister Tricoupis openly proposed to Belgrade and Sofia the partition of Turkey in Europe on the basis of a treaty in which the future frontiers of the Balkan States were to be drawn in advance. To speak of such a plan to King Milan (Serbia's ruler at that time) and to Stambolov (Bulgaria's Prime Minister) was to communicate it to the Ballplatz<sup>1</sup> at Vienna and to the Sublime Porte<sup>2</sup>. The preliminary discussions did not get beyond a mere exchange of amiable courtesies. Austria-Hungary had just renewed the treaty with King Milan which led to the fratricidal Serbo-Bulgarian war (1889 to 1895). Some years later Austria Hungary was to sign a secret convention with Romania. In the event of common war with Bulgaria, Romania was to receive a portion of Bulgarian territory. In 1897, during the Greco-Turkish war, Deliannis (the new Greek Minister) renewed the proposals of Tricoupis. But his partition formula, was not in the Bulgaria's interest. The Bulgarians preferred negotiating with the Turks for new concessions for their churches and schools in Macedonia, rather than risking taking part in an ill-conceived and ill-conducted war. Soon after (in 1901), Austria-Hungary brought

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<sup>1</sup> The location of the residence of the Emperor of Austria Hungary.

<sup>2</sup> The name used for the Palace of the Sultan (Ruler) of Ottoman Empire.

about the Greco-Romanian rapprochement which, together with the Austro-Serbian treaty and the Austro-Romanian convention, finally "enclosed" Bulgaria and threatened to paralyze its action in Macedonia. A Balkan alliance seemed as far remote as possible.

The revolution of 1904 in Macedonia made the question an international one. Wallachian<sup>3</sup> propaganda and Greek "conversions" in Macedonia led to a diplomatic rupture between Greece and Romania (1903). The murder of King Allexandre Obrenovits and the return of the Karageorgevits dynasty to Belgrade (1903) emancipated Serbia from Austrian influence. The natural alternatives for Bulgaria were either rapprochement with Russia or the renaissance of the Yugo-Slav (slavic for Southern-Slavs) alliance.

The young generation in Serbia and Bulgaria went further and became once more enthusiastic for the federation idea. Writers, artists and students in Belgrade and Sofia exchanged visits; diplomats followed suit.

By 1904, people in Belgrade were discussing a scheme for an alliance to secure the union of Old Serbia and of Macedonia as far as possible by peaceful means, but in case of extremity, by force of arms. Difficulties arose however, over the issue of frontiers. The Serbians gave their agreement on principle, only to propose the very next day a geographical interpretation of the term "Old Serbia," to cover the whole of the Macedonia. The Bulgarians regarded these claims as exorbitant; and finally after

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<sup>3</sup> Wallachia - a former principality, now part of Romania.

three days of futile disputes, gave up the idea of an offensive alliance.

On April 25, 1904, the two concluded a defensive alliance. But this treaty, far too vague in its terms, had no practical result. The treaty was immediately divulged and seeds of distrust consequently implanted in the minds of the allies. The Serbians regarded the treaty as annulled in 1908 after Bulgaria declared it's independence from the Ottoman Empire without consulting Serbia. This declaration was in variance with Serbian national policy, which was then passing through a critical phase owing to Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Serbians accused the Bulgarians of profiting from their losses instead of coming to their assistance. Old distrust was about to emerge when Russian diplomacy resumed the idea of the alliance. The Russian diplomats took up the promises of the Young Turks<sup>4</sup> seriously, and proposed a universal Balkan alliance with a free and constitutionally governed Turkey as a member. They wanted an alliance facing the Danube rather than the Bosphorus. Balkan diplomats knew well enough that the "sick man" was incurable; but seized the chance. Here again the old difficulties about partition rose.

In 1910 conferences were held at St. Petersburg which did not succeed, however, in resolving the issues. Bulgaria was by no means disposed to sanction Serbian ambitions favored by Russian

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<sup>4</sup> Young Turks - members of a revolutionary party in Turkey in the early years of the 20th century.

diplomacy, even in the highly general form of a possible extension of Old Serbia towards the south.

The event which led Bulgaria to consider the necessity of a Balkan alliance in a more serious light was the beginning of the Turko-Italian war at the end of September 1911. After consultations between the Serbian and Bulgarian cabinets, the head of the latter, Gueshoff, realized the necessity and possibility of territorial concession in Macedonia.

Public opinion in Bulgaria was against such a concession. Better an autonomous, but whole Macedonia under Turkish suzerainty, rather than independent, on conditions of partition - such had always been the Bulgarian point of view. In December of 1911 the Serbs resubmitted their alliance proposal, but after ten days without a reply they had to modify their proposition. Not until then did the Bulgarian government decide to treat.

The situation was quite ripe. The "newborn" was delivered quickly but proved to be premature and too fragile to survive. It was a temporary alliance that would not outlast the defeat of the common "eternal enemy," the Ottoman Empire. After which it was doomed to fall apart, bursting at the seams of patched-up disagreements. The coalition was built out of military necessity, on the quicksand of irreconcilable old rivalries, and obvious cracks appeared in the hastily erected structure in the process of construction itself. It is not an overstatement to say that the beginning made the end a foregone conclusion, when a settlement of intra-league differences was tacitly postponed at a

time which could not have been worse for Bulgaria. Partition, once conceded instead of autonomy, was bound to give rise to conflicts and would serve as an excuse for interventions by neighboring rivals.

The military and political alliance was formed under Bulgaria's treaties with Serbia (29 February 1912) and Greece (16 May 1912), and under the agreement with Montenegro (late August 1912), followed by military conventions. Whenever there was talk of the "great cause which demanded sacrifices," Bulgaria was implied. A dignified arbiter, Russia's Emperor Nicholas II, was to partition the so called "disputed zone" in North-Western Macedonia even though it had been incorporated within the boundaries of Bulgaria under the 19 February Treaty of San Stefano between Russia and the Ottoman Empire and its population was predominantly Bulgarian.

Bulgaria's National Assembly Chairman and leader of the Progressive Liberal Party, Stoyan Deneff, tried to justify the renunciation of the "San Stefano ideal," which had been upheld for decades, on the grounds that irredentists' aspirations needed a broader interpretation and should not be confined to the Macedonian question, the pivot of Bulgaria's foreign policy. "We Bulgarians have developed a bad habit" he said "for 30 years now we have been mesmerized by Macedonia and see nothing except Macedonia."

Bulgaria's Prime Minister Ivan E. Gueshoff, leader of the Popular Party, was a master of political compromise - sometimes

despite the cost. By conceding one eighth of Bulgarian Macedonia, he hoped to win the other seven eighths. He would exchange Skopje for Adrianople. "The wish is the creator of the thought" - this proverb aptly illustrates Gueshoff's attitude. He was confident that the Balkan League would endure as the "seventh European power." The prime minister was earnestly resolved to spare no efforts in pursuit of the common success.

His partners, the Serbs and the Greek, however, thought otherwise. They could be either allies or enemies of Bulgaria. They chose the former, although the danger of the latter lingered on. Never did any coalition of powers launch a war on the basis of flimsier understandings among them about what it was they were fighting for than did the participants of this military action against the Turks. The relations among the supposed allies, and particularly the most prominent of them - Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks - had, even before this, been hostile - ridden by rivalries, suspicions and conflicting aims. The Bulgarian dream of full national liberation and unification would clash with Belgrade's dream of making Serbia a "Piedmont<sup>5</sup> of South Slavs," and Athens' stubborn insistence that "Macedonia is Greek".

The Balkan League was formed on Bulgaria's initiative. Bulgaria was the linchpin of the alliance. She could not wage war on the Ottoman Empire alone, not only because she was weak, but also because neither her neighbors nor the Great Powers would let

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<sup>5</sup> A region of north-west Italy, lying at the base of the Alps mountains.

her expand independently into Macedonia and Eastern Thrace. Gueshoff had to abandon his idea of restoring San Stefano Bulgaria, as he put it, as "the gospel seed - deep, out of sight and out of mind - so that it would rise from the dead". The methods of "quiet diplomacy", employed at that time, were as secure as they were dangerous, depending on the amount and level of public awareness. Each of the allies, and particularly the most prominent of them - Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks - had ambitions related to that territory that could be satisfied only at the expense of the others. Macedonia was like the child disputed between the two women before King Solomon: the false mother would have the child divided into two, whereas the true mother would concede it whole.

Nicholas II proved inadequate as honest broker because he was too committed to Serbia. Although not without interest, Vienna warned the Bulgarians: "Russian diplomacy would not live up to the hopes which the Russian people give you. Beware!" It would have been better had the entire Entente taken up the arbitration of the Balkan disputes, because then the objectiveness of France could be relied on. The Triple Alliance predicted a "bloody quarrel among the allies themselves" especially if the Ottoman Empire was defeated.

This gloomy prophecy was not just malevolence. For better or for worse, the Central Powers came to see the Balkan bloc as the "sour grapes" and an "instrument of Russian policy." Ensuing developments, though, proved that was not exactly the case.

Bulgaria's access to Central Europe was blocked. Her allies, Serbia and Greece, seeking to cut off possible support from Vienna, discredited it as a motor force of the new group.

Twenty-eight years later King Ferdinand, Bulgaria's monarch, described his ill-fated consent to the partition of Macedonia as "the greatest flaw of that league which soon produced its pernicious results". The Popular and Progressive-Liberal Government became a political scapegoat. As to the durability of the alliance, its initiator Dimitar Rizov, a prominent Bulgarian diplomat born in the Macedonian town of Bitola (Monastir), was absolutely right when he argued for joint action with the Albanians "with whom we really have nothing to divide and can be friends." The germ of destruction was laid in the foundation of the Balkan League.

The gullibility of Bulgarian politicians was skillfully abused. Nikola Gennadiev, leader of the Popular Liberal Party, was right when he said: "In politics, when great historical events are at stake, morality is statesmen's least consideration." British trained Gueshoff should have recalled Queen Victoria's maxim that the British Empire has neither eternal friends, nor eternal enemies, it has only eternal interests. Yesterday's enemies would hardly become today's loyal allies respecting their partner's interests.

When coalitions go to war, the war effort is not always equal. Guided by geopolitics, the Bulgarian army bore the impact of the fighting in the war against the Ottoman Empire in 1912 and

won a victory, committing the largest resources and sustaining the heaviest losses<sup>6</sup>.

During the battles the allies reluctantly admitted Bulgaria's decisive contribution but when the successful outcome was at hand they started talking about "equal partition" and "maintenance of the Balkan equilibrium" despite the treaty obligations they had assumed. This implied that the war of liberation would be perverted into a war of conquest since a considerable part of the Bulgarian population in Macedonia would pass from one foreign domination to another. This negated the main aim of Bulgarian involvement in the war. Only foreign statesmen could blame Bulgaria for hair-splitting when she insisted on retaining particular towns and villages. Even the most faithful advocates of the Balkan League learned, at their expense (when it was too late), that once they allowed a dispute over indisputable matters, they were bound to see the "disputed zone" expand to test how much they were susceptible to bow to pressure. Land and population could be subject to compromise, depending on who would benefit, but not at any price.

The Great Powers referred to Bulgaria as the "pillar" and "first fiddle" of the Balkan League. They held her responsible for her allies' actions, but denied her the legitimacy of her gains. In the course of the First Balkan War, Bulgaria gradually

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<sup>6</sup> In the first Balkan War Bulgaria mobilized 350,000. The armies of its three allies numbered a total of 295,000: Serbia 175,000, Greece 90,000 and Montenegro 90,000. Bulgaria lost 83,000 troops, Serbia 31,000, Greece 5,000.

lost the support of the Entente, especially that of Russia, without having gained favor with the Triple Alliance. The "Concert of Europe"<sup>7</sup> prized obedient winners. The entry of the Bulgarian army into the prohibited "defence zone" of Constantinople<sup>8</sup> and the Straits, and the attempt to establish a firm foothold on the Sea of Marmara (see appendix), gave rise to strong suspicions among the outside powers. This was followed attempts to overpower Bulgaria and prevent her from getting too strong. Her Balkan neighbors were only too glad to comply.

The signing of the Peace Treaty of London (17 May 1913) ended a war whose outcome would spark yet another. The aggravation of disputes undermined the foundations of the Balkan League which had defeated the Ottoman Empire. Intended and planned as a long-term alliance by Russia and the Entente, the League proved essentially temporary. After it had served its purpose in the Balkans, the Great Powers declined to allow it its just deserves. Weary of this premature clash on the eve of World War I, the London parties did not partition the "Ottoman legacy" West of the line between Media (on the Black Sea) and Enos (on the Aegean), excluding Albania and the Aegean islands, even though the winners were certain to fail to agree on the delimitation of the new borders in the face-to-face negotiations.

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<sup>7</sup> A term which referred to the Great Powers in Europe at that time.

<sup>8</sup> The Bulgarian Army advanced to Catalca - 40 km away from Constantinople.

## **The Dissolvment of the League and the Conflict between the Allies**

The principle of fair distribution according to ethnicity and the proportion of casualties, proposed by the Bulgarian Government, was met with daggers drawn by Belgrade and Athens as inconsistent with their interests. Instead, they proposed the ancient rule of conquerors that each take the territories its troops had conquered (see appendix). This boded ill for the future. The bridges between the Balkan allies were heavily mined. Old animosities and new reckonings tangled into a severe knot.

In Thessaloiki, on 19 May 1913, Serbia and Greece signed a treaty of alliance pledging to go to war against Bulgaria unless the latter acknowledged the principle of de facto occupation. Any issue could set the fuse which a miscalculation could ignite. This time Bulgaria's geopolitical location at the center of the Balkan Peninsula proved a liability. As her neighbors reached for Bulgarian lands, they drew together into conspiracy.

The expansion of the Bulgarian state on the basis of ethnic principle for the sake of national liberation and unification promised to be painful, not to say impossible. All Bulgarians believed they had the right to live under the same state roof; otherwise they felt forsaken. Seething passions welled from the bottom to the highest echelons of power, which had to resist their pressure and dampen enraged sentiments.

The Gueshoff administration agreed to a political compromise when it admitted a "disputed zone" in Macedonia. Would the

succeeding Daneff administration take up the next step and concede part of the undisputed zone as well? One compromise usually leads to another, greater one.

The political compromise worked out at the formation of the Balkan League made it virtually impossible for Bulgaria to make further compromise after the victory over the Ottoman Empire. It all depended on the cost of the compromise. For its part, the High Command not only refused to make any concessions but also went to the other extreme urging war at any cost. Policy-wise, it stuck with the militant opposition which would "not for the world" concede Macedonia voluntarily.

A treaty is either observed or violated. No change of *rebus sic stantibus*<sup>9</sup> could justify the treachery of Serbia and Greece. The Balkan League was blown up from within. Since the majestic arbiter, the Russian Tzar, was at a loss how to draw the border in Macedonia, a free and fair referendum in all possible "disputed zones" would have been the most accurate indication of the people's will for self-determination. The moral obligation to Bulgaria's compatriots in Macedonia who found themselves under another yoke called for liberation, but sober reason called against the use of force even for intimidation - since all international odds were against it. The bristling anti-Bulgarian coalition was just waiting for a pretext to allay, once and for all, the sinister specter of "Greater Bulgaria."

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<sup>9</sup> A term in New Latin meaning: as long as conditions have not substantially changed <a doctrine in international law that treaties are binding only *rebus sic stantibus*>.

St. Petersburg and Vienna suspected that Daneff had something up his sleeve. Despite the Russians' blunt warning, he still harbored the hope that he could count on Russia's support in stopping non-Slav Romania and especially the defeated Ottoman Empire. The Prime Minister ignored the shifts on the European scene the year before the Great War. Bulgaria had advanced too near to Constantinople and the Straits. Romania was a coveted ally in the war against Austria-Hungary. In fact, Daneff did not believe that the former allies would go so far as war, therefore concessions to secure the rear were unnecessary and unjustified. The perceptive politician, however, should have anticipated the worst: a war of all against one.

No one starts a war without a belief in the chances of winning it. Hostilities can break out even without a declaration of war, but not without the proper diplomatic preparations on the part of the responsible government. In the extreme conditions of a hostile encirclement, Bulgaria's political and military leaders should have put their differences aside for a couple of months at least. The King and the generals were ready to go to war, but had no idea how to cajole or overpower the enemy to conclude a peace. When hostilities commenced the correlation of forces changed at a menacing pace. The victorious Bulgarian army should have turned back since it could no longer rely on others to secure its rear.

Daneff's government should have kept in mind that a sword that was still out of the scabbard could strike at any time. Too much power was concentrated in the minds and the hands of the

High Command whose war howls overwhelmed the voices of the political leaders. Jealous as they were of their prerogatives, the ministers even referred essentially political matters to the High Command, not only for advice but for decision. Moreover, it was commonplace knowledge that the Commander in Chief, General Mihail Savov, did not report directly to the Council of Ministers but was subordinated solely to the King. The latter was in dilemma keeping politicians and generals at bay while fueling the mutual suspicion; because he could demand things from the former and entirely different things from the latter without letting either know. It was he, the "least responsible" under the Constitution, who would bear the heaviest responsibility before the people and history.

The clouds of war hung heavy over the Balkans. The armies awaited marching orders. The governments of the neighboring countries pretended that they would finally take their seats at the negotiating table. The Great Powers were concerned lest their Great War break out prematurely. Everybody was talking about peace but was preparing for war. Only the Government in Sofia hoped to fish an olive branch out of the Neva<sup>10</sup>. However, the King, the High Command, the liberal opposition and the Internal Macedonian-Adrianopolitan Revolutionary Organization sounded the alarm that this would be a "second Canossa"<sup>11</sup>. They did not yet

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<sup>10</sup> The river that runs through St. Petersburg.

<sup>11</sup> Canossa - a village in northern Italy where Emperor Henry IV made humble to Pope Gregory VII in 1077. It is used in the sense of a place of or occasion of submission, humiliation or penance.

know that Bucharest and Constantinople were biding their time.

The cost of a conference of the four Balkan prime ministers in St. Petersburg imposed a heavy loss (Skopje and Thessaloniki). The stakes of a re-enacted war, however, were almost a complete loss of the gains achieved in 1912. Those ominous days and hours which proved to be fateful for decades and centuries ahead, could only be managed with composure and caution, determination and foresight. These virtues were invaluable in those tense days and nights when war and peace were in the balance. Unfortunately, none of the politicians in charge possessed all these qualities. The weight of responsibility shifted onto the High Command. It was only logical that the generals would cut entangled knots with a blow of a sword rather than try to undo them by political means. The recently allied armies mobilized against each other. At such moments, a rifle goes off on its own. This time it was the guns that went off.

Bulgarian politicians and generals lost because they broke the golden rule that "to rule is to anticipate." They were preoccupied with the plight of the Bulgarian population in Macedonia which had come under foreign rule. The means of a peaceful settlement were soon exhausted. The former allies repudiated the treaties, and Nicholas II was unwilling to act in his role of final arbiter. Russian diplomacy simply reckoned that it was not worth keeping Bulgaria and losing the other Balkan states, especially Serbia. For the French policy on the Balkans it was high time to replace "intractable" Bulgaria with Romania,

wooed by both imperialist groups (the Entente and the Triple alliance). Again, Bulgarian foreign policy failed to master the art of identifying possibilities in the impossible.

The Bulgarian attack in the night of 16 to 17 June 1913 was a provoked and long awaited for pretext of declaring war on Bulgaria under the best possible circumstances. Only now did the former allies proclaim the collapse of the Balkan League and formally denounce the treaties and all treaty obligations. The limited show of military strength in Macedonia did politics a disservice: it discredited it in the eyes of Russia and the other Entente powers, and gave Romania and the Ottoman Empire a unique and highly desired opportunity to intervene in the war against Bulgaria.

Few nations have gone through such fateful vicissitudes as the Bulgarians in that fatal summer of 1913. A mere two months and eleven days after the signing of the Peace Treaty of London which crowned the resounding victory over the Ottoman Empire, the terms of peace dictated to Bulgaria in Bucharest deprived her of the fruits of that victory.

### **Conclusion**

Never a lesson more clear and brutal. United, the peoples of the Balkan peninsula, oppressed for so long, worked miracles that a mighty but divided Europe could not even conceive. Disunited they were forced to come to exhaust themselves in their effort to exploit each other for territorial gains, an effort indefinitely

prolonged. For far from bringing a solution, the second war was only the beginning of other wars, or rather a continuous war; the worst kind of all, a war of religion, reprisals, and race; a war of one people against another, of man against man and brother against brother. It became a competition, as to who can best depose and "denationalize" his neighbor.

The enforcement of the Treaty of Constantinople, signed on September 29, 1913 perpetuated an unfair territorial settlement in the Balkans which soured relations in the south-easternmost end of Europe. The famed "Balkan equilibrium" proved to be if not a cause, then at least a pretext for another, larger war. The Great powers avoided the premature complications in the summer of 1913 but could not avert the flare-up which led to global conflagration in the summer of 1914.

These tragic events demonstrated once again that the real struggle in the Balkans, as in Europe and America, is not between oppressors and oppressed. The ones really responsible for the hostilities, brutalities, executions, assassinations, drownings, burnings, massacres and atrocities are not the Balkan peoples. Lets not condemn the victims. Nor are the European governments really responsible. They at least tried to amend things and certainly they wished for peace without knowing how to establish it. The ones that are really to blame are those who misled public opinion and take advantage of the peoples ignorance to rise disquieting rumors and sound the alarm bell, inciting their country and consequently other countries into enmity. The real

criminals are those who by interest or inclination, declaring constantly that war is inevitable, end by making it so, asserting that they are powerless to prevent it. The real culprits are those who sacrifice the general interest in which they so little understand, and who hold up to their country a sterile policy of conflict and reprisals. In reality there is no salvation, no way out either for small states or for great countries except by union and conciliation.

The significance of looking back into those historical events lies primarily in the light they cast on the excruciating situation prevailing today in the same Balkan world were they took place. The greatest value that they possess is revealing to the people of this age how much of today's problem has deep roots and how much does not. It will be easier to think of solutions when such realities are kept in mind.

Over eighty years of tremendous change in the remainder of Europe and of further internecine strife in the Balkans themselves have done little to alter the essence of the problem this geographic region presents for Europe, for the United States and for the United Nations. Obviously, it is a problem with very deep historical roots. Those roots reach back, clearly not only into the centuries of Turkish domination but also into the Byzantine penetration of the Balkans even before that time.

The measure of historical continuity however should not be exaggerated. There are significant differences between the Balkan situation in 1913 and that of the present day. But even more

significant than those differences are the many and depressing evidences of similarity between what was occurring in the Balkans in 1913 and what was going on there recently.

The most significant motivation factor involved in the Balkan wars, then and now, was not religion, as one might assume, but aggressive nationalism: a tendency to view the outsider, generally, with dark suspicion, and to see the political-military opponent, in particular, as a fearful and implacable enemy to be rendered harmless only by total and unpitying destruction. In the face of extreme nationalistic self-admiration and suspicion of every neighbor, there was little room for anything resembling conciliation. And so it remains today.

While the Balkan situation in the past and present is one to which the United States cannot be indifferent, it has and will be obviously primarily a problem for the Europeans. It is the European continent, not the American, that is affected. The Europeans have the physical and military resources with which to confront the problem. And if they claim, as many of them do, that they lack the political unity to confront it successfully, the answer is that perhaps this is one of those instances when one has to rise to the occasion.

On the other hand, it is clear that no one - no particular country and no group of countries - wants, or should be expected, to occupy the distracted Balkan region, subdue its excited peoples and to hold them in order until they can calm down and begin to look at their problems in a more orderly way. In the

long run, no region can solve any other region's problems. The best the outsider can do is to give occasional supplementary help in the pinches.

Two things were necessary then and are now: the first, a new and clearly accepted territorial *status quo*; the second, certain greater and more effective restraints on the behavior of the states of the region, which do not wish to comply with (or to accept) the political and social realities at the end of the 20th century.

The first of these requirements obviously could not be met solely by negotiations among the various parties themselves. Their views should, of course, be heard and seriously considered; but it takes, as we all have witnessed, outside mediation, and outside force, to devise a reasonable settlement and to bring the various parties to accept and observe it. As for the second, the restraints on the Balkan parties in the utilization of what they view as their unlimited sovereignty and freedom of action will clearly have to be greater than those that are now normally applied in the international community.

Finally there is only one logical conclusion, that crystallizes definite and clear out of what this modest overview of events, both past and present, has attempted to summarize and that is that it is to the most immediate of interests of the European and international community to spare no effort in attempting to tackle and resolve promptly the rivalries in the Balkans, notorious as the "powder keg" of the continent, for

their in no doubt that the alternative would certainly be  
extreemly dangerous, if not catastrophic.

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APPENDIX

THE BALKAN STATES

With New Frontiers according to Treaties of London,  
Constantinople & Bucharest



NOTE TO COLORING

Acquisition of New Territories shown in darker tints